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TAGS: [KNNP](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: BRIEFING TURKEY ABOUT IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

REF: A. ANKARA 16
[B](#). STATE 6236
[C](#). ANKARA 188
[D](#). STATE 14138

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: UNVIE Ambassador Greg Schulte led a three member team to brief and consult with the Turkish government February 15-17 on the Iranian nuclear program and related diplomacy. MFA, Turkish General Staff and Turkish Intelligence officials were clearly already convinced of Iran's intentions, and welcomed the additional details on the program. Officials brought together in the Prime Ministry voiced more skepticism regarding the status of Iran's efforts and the implications for Turkey of Iran's acquiring a weapon.

Ambassador Schulte described a graduated series of diplomatic meetings at the IAEA and in the UNSC and urged Turkish support for the international consensus on Iran. He also solicited Turkey's ideas on ways to apply pressure on the Iranian leadership while sparing the general population. Turkish officials expressed general support for US/EU-3 efforts and strongly voiced continued diplomacy, and they worried about the impact on Turkey of sanctions or military action should diplomacy fail. We have encouraged European missions to make their own case to Ankara about Iran's nuclear program. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Ambassador Schulte and experts from the Department of Energy and the intelligence community discussed the Iranian nuclear program with various Turkish agencies, academics, politicians and the media during their visit to Ankara February 15-17. Ambassador Schulte did a backgrounder with selected members of the press and held a concluding press conference as well.

The Overall Message

[1](#)3. (C) At the Prime Ministry (for senior advisors to PM Erdogan and representatives of various agencies, including the Energy Ministry, the Turkish Atomic Energy Authority and others) and at MFA (with military, intelligence and other officials) the briefing team provided a classified US intelligence assessment on Iran's nuclear program, including a technical explanation of the proliferation significance of Iran restarting its centrifuge enrichment activities, and intelligence on Iranian weaponization activities. An unclassified Department of Energy briefing was also given to

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those in attendance to reinforce the message. This unclassified DOE briefing was also made available to groups

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of parliamentarians, academics and opinion makers with whom Ambassador Schulte met.

¶4. (U) Ambassador Schulte underscored key questions raised in the briefings to drive home the point that Iran's nuclear program is anything but peaceful. He posed a number of rhetorical questions.

If Iran's program is for solely peaceful purposes then:

- why has Iran hidden sites and facilities from the IAEA and the international community?
- why has Iran failed to cooperate with the IAEA?
- why does the Iran program have significant ties to the Iranian military?
- why did Iran obtain materials and technology from the AQ Khan network, a network known for assisting in the development of the North Korean and Libya nuclear weapons program?
- why do activities in Iran's nuclear program development parallel activities in its missile development program?
- why does Iran need the enrichment technology when it currently has only one nuclear power plant and a contract for Russian fuel for that plant for the next 10 years?

¶5. (C) Ambassador Schulte declared that Turkey can play an important role in keeping pressure on the Iranian leadership and assisting in bringing a solution to this situation. He urged that Turkey reinforce the international community's message that Iran's current behavior is inappropriate and is isolating it. He said that many countries in the region are concerned about a nuclear armed Iran. Arab countries were generally reluctant to speak out against Iran; however, the recent IAEA Board of Governors meeting had both Egypt and Yemen voting to report Iran to the UNSC. Others previously

ANKARA 00000972 002 OF 003

opposed to Security Council referral, such as China, Russia, Brazil, and India, had also supported the BoG decision, he noted.

Iran's Resolve

¶6. (C) At both the Prime Ministry and MFA, Turkish officials noted that Iran's leadership and its people were resistant to outside pressures. The Iranian nuclear program was becoming a symbol of national pride. The officials worried that threats against this program may cause the Iranian leadership to dig their heels deeper and the people to rally behind them.

¶7. (C) Ambassador Schulte noted both in his official meetings and in public fora that the US was a supporter of nuclear power and had no objections to Iran having nuclear power plants. The nuclear fuel cycle and its application to produce weapons were the issue. To dissuade Iran from pursuing this technology, pressure must be focused towards the leadership and not the people. A focused, graduated approach with multi-national support was the best way to achieve the desired result.

Is all Enrichment Bad?

¶8. (S) Questions about Iran's claim that it seeks enrichment capability for peaceful purposes only came up in all of the Schulte team's meetings. The briefers walked through the implications of a functioning uranium enrichment capability. They noted that a weapons-related enrichment facilities are much smaller than ones enriching uranium for nuclear power generator, and thus are easier to hide. They noted that for Iran, the economics of a fuel production facility for

peaceful uses makes no sense. Iran currently has no nuclear power plants, and Russia has contracted to provide fuel to the only one under construction, at Bushehr, for ten years. Given Iran's limited reserves of natural uranium and the large amounts of fuel required for power plants, Iran could only supply fuel to a limited nuclear power industry for a very brief time before exhausting its reserves.

Are Sanctions the Answer?

¶9. (C) The possibility of sanctions was among Turkey's identified concerns at all the meetings here. Recalling the impact on the Turkish economy of Iraq sanctions, government officials and others expressed concern that Turkey would again suffer if economic sanctions are imposed on Iran. They urged that all possible diplomatic efforts be made before sanctions or other more drastic actions are considered.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Schulte stressed that sanctions were not being discussed at the moment. Instead, what seems likely is a graduated approach that would see UNSC Presidency statements and resolutions calling on Iran to meet its obligations, as well as steps to strengthen the IAEA's authority. Schulte did not believe Iran wanted to be isolated and that concerted international pressure could convince Tehran to change its behavior. However, recalling the experience with sanctions in the Balkans, Ambassador Schulte thought "smart sanctions," targeted on the leadership of Iran and their supporters would be most effective. These would be more likely to avoid driving the Iranian people closer to the current government.

Actions by Turkey

¶11. (C) Ambassador Schulte called on Turkey to deliver a firm and consistent message that Iran has lost the confidence of the international community. He commended a statement released several days earlier by MFA Spokesman Namik Tan for doing exactly that. Schulte also noted that given Turkey's long experience in dealing with Iran, we welcome Ankara's insights into the leadership and what levers the international community might employ effectively to persuade it to change course. Turkish MFA Deputy U/S Uzumcu expressed interest in this, but made no specific comment.

Russia and China

¶12. (C) In response to questions regarding Russia's motives, Ambassador Schulte and his team explained that Russian views on the Iranian program have recently changed. Russia now sees the possibility of a nuclear armed Iran as a problem. In order to prevent this, Russia offered to carry out

ANKARA 00000972 003 OF 003

enrichment for Iran on its own territory. The economics of this proposal work against Russia, demonstrating its level of concern. As proposed, this arrangement would prevent Iranian scientists from accessing key components of the enrichment process.

¶13. (C) Comment: The officials at the MFA briefing expressed no skepticism that Iran is actively pursuing the acquisition of nuclear weapons and that Tehran's success would be detrimental to Turkey's regional and security interests. More questions arose from other interlocutors about the nature of the Iranian program and its implications, with several individuals pointing to the pre-OIF assessment that Iraq was pursuing WMD as a reason to raise questions. We believe that the Schulte team's work has made clearer why we and others are so concerned about Iranian nuclear activities, and we believe their consultations with Turkey will prove helpful in the months ahead. We briefed representatives of the EC, UK, German, French, and other European missions on

February 23 regarding the Schulte team's discussions and encouraged them to hold similar consultations in Ankara, as well. Ambassador made a similar point to the Russian ambassador. The French Political Director is expected to visit in late March and the German in early April; Iran will reportedly be at the top of their agendas. We note that Russian Deputy FM Kislyak will visit Ankara March 1 for talks on Iran and other regional issues, and we will seek a readout. End comment.

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